



# WOMAN'S AUXILIARY

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## TO THE CALIFORNIA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

### **Our Work in the Blood Banks**

The miracle of having life-saving whole blood and plasma readily available for medical use has become so commonplace that few of us stop to think about all that lies behind it. This miracle did not just "happen" like those in the story books, it came about because of the vision and hard work of many dedicated men and women.

Members of the California Medical Association have been responsible perhaps more than any other single group for this miracle; they have pioneered and contributed greatly in the field of community blood banks. Other groups have joined in the effort, too—and not the least among these has been your Woman's Auxiliary, many of whose members have done much to bring about and maintain the present excellent system of C.M.A.-sponsored blood banks in California.

### **From Small Beginnings . . .**

The first nonprofit, medically sponsored, community blood bank in the United States opened its doors in the basement of the old Irwin mansion in San Francisco in June of 1941. It was conceived of, sponsored and operated by members of the San Francisco Medical Society. Its original volunteer program was sponsored and set into motion by the San Francisco Woman's Auxiliary. At that time, blood was supplied by about 200 donors a month and was used by local civilian hospitals as well as by British ships and bases.

With the coming of World War II, the Blood Bank made its products available to the military, and the importance of its existence took on a new and great significance. The number of donors jumped to over 700 a week. So many volunteers were needed on the staff that the San Francisco Woman's Auxiliary could no longer handle the job alone and other community groups came in to help out.

During World War II there was a further development of blood banks throughout California, which resulted in their phenomenal use and growth. Hundreds of thousands of units of blood were processed for the military. During this period, your State Auxiliary added blood bank activities to its formal roster of projects, and members all over the state gave of their time and effort.

### **Peacetime Volunteer Activities**

The coming of peace saw the change-over in blood banks from military to exclusively civilian function.

However, during the Korean War many banks participated in the Defense Blood Program and the bank in San Francisco alone accounted for 169,632 units of whole blood in a little less than three years. Volunteer work was needed accordingly, and many Auxiliary members participated.

How the present network of 12 C.M.A.-sponsored blood banks operates throughout California—and reciprocates with other out-of-state blood banks all over the country—need not be described here. It should be pointed out, however, that ten of the twelve utilize volunteers, and the low cost per unit of blood is due in good measure to the services of these volunteers.

At present, there is no longer a formal program of blood bank activities in the State Auxiliary, but county auxiliaries all over the state stress the importance of blood bank work to their members. Hundreds of physicians' wives are serving in their local community blood banks. It is noteworthy that several Auxiliary members who were original volunteers at the first blood bank in San Francisco are still giving loyal service there.

### **How Volunteers Help**

There are several different types of volunteer work which Auxiliary members may do. They may act as couriers, transporting the blood by car from the blood bank to local hospitals or to depots for shipment elsewhere. They may staff the canteen, providing refreshments for donors and other workers. They may assist the nurses in "prepping" the donors and in the actual taking of blood. They may help with preparation of sterile dressings, etc., or they may staff the appointment desk and do other clerical duties.

All of this work is vital to the smooth and efficient functioning of a blood bank, and it carries real responsibility. Volunteers must know their jobs, and to this end they receive careful instructions and training.

Working in local blood banks is one other aspect of your Auxiliary's total effort to serve well in the community. But blood bank volunteers feel that this work holds a special reward: It provides one of the closest ways of working first-hand with the medical profession in the great task of saving human lives.